Tells the Facts and Names the Names

$2.50

CounterPunch

July 1-15 2001 *Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair* VOL. 8, NO. 13

In This Issue

From War on Drugs to Full-Bore Counter-Insurgency

- RAND Think-Tank tells Bush To Stop Kidding Around and Beef Up US Presence In Colombia to Wider War Footing
- Report Urges Same Strategy That Killed 200,000 Indians in Guatemala, Pooh-Poohs Silly Concern for Human Rights
- Elliott Abrams and 80s Thugs Back Again

Our Little Secrets

- Prisoners Battle California's Prison SHU Torture
- Angelina Jolie and the French Revolution
- Remembering Shahak
- Murder in Navajoland

Blueprints for the Colombian War

We've been saying it all along. The war in Colombia isn't about drugs. It's about the annihilation of popular uprisings, by the FARC, the ELN or Indian peasants fending off the ravages of oil companies, cattle barons and mining firms. A good old-fashioned counter-insurgency war, designed to clear the way for American corporations to set up shop in Colombia, with cocaine as the scare tactic. Here we review two Defense Department commissioned reports both outlining in chilling terms the same strategy of ongoing military intervention under the cover of the drug war and both urging the Bush administration to drop the pretext of counter-narcotics and get on with the business of wiping out the insurgents.

Last year the US Air Force commissioned the RAND think tank to prepare a review of the situation in Colombia. In early June RAND submitted its 130-page report, called "The Colombian Labyrinth: The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and Its Implications for Regional Stability". The other report is a paper written by Gabriel Marcella, titled "Plan Colombia: the Strategic and Operational Imperatives". Marcella is a former chief adviser to the head of the US Southern Command. He now teaches on national security matters at the Army War College.

Together, the two reports reach the same conclusion: the US needs to step up its military involvement in Colombia and quit forfeiting options by limiting its operations to counter-narcotics raids. Along the way, both reports make a number of astonishing admissions about the paramilitaries and their links to the drug trade, about human rights abuses by the US-trained Colombian military and about the irrationality of crop fumigation.

RAND argues that the drug war approach is on the brink of not only failing, but also of prompting a wider conflict that might require the insertion of US troops. "If the Pastrana administration falters, either in its counter-narcotics or counter-insurgency approach, the US would be confronted with an unpalatable choice. It could escalate its commitment to include perhaps an operational role for US forces in Colombia, or scale it down, which would involve some significant costs, including a serious loss of credibility and degradation of the US's ability to muster regional support for its counter-narcotics and political objectives."

The RAND study draws heavily from a December 2000 report by the World Bank, titled "Violence in Colombia: Building Sustainable Peace and Social Capital," which concluded that the quid pro quo for Colombia getting any future large infusions of international financial aid will depend on their successful suppression of the FARC and other rebel groups. Another World Bank memo describes the FARC's fundraising strategy as a "loot-seeking" assault on "primary commodities": cattle ranches on the eastern plains, commercial agriculture in Urabá, oil in Magladena, gold mines in Antioquia and the coca fields of Putumayo. RAND cites a former CIA analyst as saying that the FARC has invested its "taxes" on these industries into "a strategic financial reserve", which will enable them to "sustain an escalation of the conflict". While the FARC peasant army has doubled over the past decade, it still only

(**Colombia** *continued on page 5*)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Our Little Secrets

Amazing SHU Strike

In an extraordinary feat of organizing, about 900 prisoners in the so-called Secure Housing Units (SHUs) in the infamous California prisons of Pelican Bay and Corcoran staged a hunger strike in the first week of July. The hunger strike concerned the policy of the California Department of Corrections (CDC), whereby those designated as prison gang members are removed from the general population and isolated in SHUs, confined for 22 hours per day for years on end in 8x10 windowless cells. SHU inmates are always shackled when they leave their cells, exercising in a "yard" which is really a larger concrete cell with no exercise equipment and no view of the outside world.

Unsurprisingly, the CDC's evidentiary requirement for prisoner gang "validation" is vague and open-ended. The most frequent way to doom a prisoner is by an anonymous informant's summary assertion that "prisoner x is a gang member or associate". Other conduct that the CDC uses to justify gang membership includes possession of literature or art; writing to another prisoner's family; assisting another prisoner with legal work; signing birthday or get well cards to prisoners; exercising or otherwise interacting with another prisoner. Prisoners are not allowed to present evidence or witnesses in their defense.

There is no requirement that the information be current; a parolee returned to prison for a new offense after ten years on the outside can be thrown in the SHU as a gangster based on information from his previous incarceration.

Assignment to a SHU is for an indeterminate period. Before 1999, the only way for an alleged gang member to be released from a SHU was to parole, die, go insane, or "debrief" (become an informer for the CDC, and finger other prisoners as gang members). Since rule change 99/08, a prisoner can also be released to the general inmate population, if prison investigators determine that he has been free from gang activity for six years.

The strike was organized by Steve Castillo, an inmate at Pelican Bay's Security Housing Unit who has waged a legal campaign for years on this issue. In a visit to Pelican Bay on the fourth day of the hunger strike, Friends of CounterPunch were struck by Castillo's warmth, intellect, invincible spirit, and the charming smile beneath his bushy mustache. From his letter:

"Rarely in a lifetime do we ever witness a sane person go insane. And even more rare is it to witness such an occurrence happen more than once. It is more common for us to just see a person when they have already lost their sanity. But here, I have seen such things more times than I want to remember. I thought that seeing a prisoner get shot by staff was a frightening and chilling event, but that in no way compares to seeing a prisoner calmly playing a game of chess with pieces made out of his own feces. Or, prisoners smearing their bodies and cells with their feces. Or, watching prisoners throwing urine and feces at each other through the perforated cell doors. And worse yet, since we are cell fed, we eat our meals under these conditions.

"In sum, this place seems to lose all semblance of a prison and instead takes on a laboratory environment for human experimentation…

"Think about it for a second: we are told not to talk to prisoners who are validated gang members or associates. And it doesn't matter if you know that they are members or associates or not. Once, I was in a section where I was the only prisoner who was not validated at the time. How can I not talk to anyone?! Before I won that case in 1999 in Sacramento, the means for obtaining release from the SHU was by paroling, debriefing, dying, and (following the Madrid court decision) the loss of sanity. Well, if a prisoner like me doesn't have an established parole date, parole from the SHU is out of the question. The parole board doesn't give parole dates to prisoners in the SHU. Dying, well, I don't want to die. Insanity, who really wants to lose their minds?

"That leaves debriefing: I don't want to become an informant for the same reasons that prison staff told the Madrid court why they don't inform on their fellow employees, i.e. for fear of retaliation or death. Plus the safety of my family is more important to me than anything…

"Following my court victory in 1999, CDC's new rule is that debriefing is no longer the only requirement for SHU release. Now, it's supposedly an option (yeah right). [The new rule is that six years of gang inactivity can qualify an inmate for SHU release, at the discretion of prison administrators.] But, CDC refuses to define 'gang activity' and so in the eyes of the CDC, everything and anything is gang activity. And, should a prisoner have no gang activity, there is an exception clause that allows them to keep us in the SHU anyway…Thus, for the most part, the majority of us aren't going anywhere.

"I've not held my daughters for nearly 10 years. I want to hold my mother before she gets any older and passes on. I want to see trees, grass, birds, sky, anything besides just cement and steel. I want to feel the warm of the sun and maybe rid myself of this deathly pale skin color. Most importantly, I don't want to die or go insane in here. Nor do I want rage to be an everlasting byproduct of my life. Like many other prisoners here, I see no other way to obtain immediate attention and change."

The SHU inmates suspended their hunger strike after California state senator Richard Polanco (chairman of the Joint Committee on Prison Construction and Operations) asked the prisoners to call off the hunger strike and promised to look into their complaints. If their grievances are not addressed, the prisoners vow to resume their hunger strike next January.

Cheektowaga Cont.

CounterPuncher Jack Bradigan Spula, a resident of Rochester NY, brings new fuel to the debate over what precisely is the es-

Editors
Alexander Cockburn
Jeffrey St. Clair

Business Manager
Becky Grant

Design
Deborah Thomas

Counselor
Ben Sonnenberg

Published twice monthly except August, 22 issues a year:
$40 individuals,
$100 institutions/supporters
$30 student/low-income
CounterPunch.
All rights reserved.
CounterPunch
3220 N. St., NW, PMB 346
Washington, DC, 20007-2829
1-800-840-3683 (phone)
1-800-967-3620 (fax)
www.counterpunch.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Shahak was above all a rationalist, who had reviewed the evidence for God's existence at the age of 13 and found it wanting. This was a year after he had been freed from Bergen-Belsen.

sence of Cheektowaga, a suburb of Buffalo in upstate New York where the late Tim McVeigh briefly worked as a warehouse guard in the early 1980s.

"The main thing to remember about this region is not that people here are unusually racist. It's that our politics and municipal boundaries, the latter hardened by state law, show a distinctive form of apartheid which few care much to disturb. Whites here are still in full flight to almost monochromatic suburbs and "good schools". Yes, that happens all over. But there aren't many areas where de facto Jim Crow has survived so comfortably. (I lived in Houston for two years, and I can tell you that city, for all its Klan and Old South associations, is kinder to minorities than is our grand old Rust Belt.)

"The problems here are rooted more deeply in slash-and-burn capitalism. Just from 1990-2000, the city of Buffalo, now bereft of steel and auto plants, rail, and Great Lakes shipping, lost more than 11 percent of its population, by official count. The city population now stands at 293,000; compare the historic high of 580,000 in 1950. The changes are mirrored in neighborhoods and infrastructure. Away from the rocking "Theater District" and other downtown attractions, many blacks, latinos, and working-class whites live in ramshackle neighborhoods; you can almost hear the bulldozers revving up. Meanwhile, the suburbs expand toward the horizon; wealthy Amherst takes pride in getting Money magazine's designation as "America's safest" town (easily decoded).

"But back to Cheektowaga. One morning a few years ago, Cynthia Wiggins, a 17-year-old black woman from the city of Buffalo, was trying to get to her job in a Cheektowaga shopping mall, right near the Borders which one CounterPunch reader mentioned. Wiggins never made it; a truck mowed her down just beyond the mall property line. Seems the mall owners (based in Syracuse, NY, by the way) didn't allow the "inner city" bus to stop on their hallowed ground. The policy changed after progressive Buffalonians raised hell. But local apartheid is still in fine working order."

Footnote: Brenda Nowell described the racism of Farmington N.M. in our last issue. A few days ago a news story came out of New Mexico indicating the fungus is thriving. Shaun Murphy, 18, of Farmington N.M. is being extradited to Colorado to face second degree murder charges in connection with the bludgeoning to death of a 16-year old Navajo high school student, Fred Martinez, Jr. His body was found near some sewer ponds south of Cortez, a Colorado town about 45 miles from Farmington. Martinez was openly gay. He left home on June 16 to attend a carnival at the Ute Mountain Roundup Rodeo. His body was found on June 21. A preliminary autopsy suggests he was bludgeoned and then died of exposure. Murphy was turned in to the cops by a friend to whom Murphy had bragged about "beating up a fag". Murphy's mother told the Denver Post that she was concerned for her son's safety at the Cortez jail since it was so close to the Ute Indian Reservation: "There is a lot of prejudice there."

REMEMBERING SHAHAK

Whenever people start complaining, quite rightly so, about the scandalously biased press coverage of Israel's conduct towards Palestinians, by way of cheering them up we remind them that 20 years ago the coverage was even worse.

If today the coverage is fractionally more honest, credit should go in part to a quirky, cantankerous professor of organic chemistry, born in a cultivated Jewish family in Warsaw, who died last week in his apartment in Jerusalem, his body worn out at the early age of 68, thanks in no small measure to the two years he spent as a boy starving in the concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen.

Year after year those on Shahak's mailing list would get, every two weeks, a package containing six or so single-space typewritten foolscap pages of his translations from the Hebrew-language press in Israel, studded with his own acerbic and often eruditely amusing comments. Each package would usually address a theme, such as demolitions of Palestinian houses, or corruption in the IDF and Mossad.

To read them was not only to learn facts entirely inaccessible in any English-language publication, but also to realize that in Hebrew-language newspapers such as Ha'aretz and Yediot Ahronot there were honorable reporters and editors without any qualms about writing and publishing material extraordinarily discreditable to Israel's "official truths" as diligently recycled by the western press corps in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Of course these journalists could have hired translators or even learned Hebrew but they didn't. They relied on the Jerusalem Post, which, precisely because it is in English, is wholly dedicated to "official truths".

Shahak was a singular man, an original. His loathing of hypocrisy rendered social democracy unappetizing to him. Politically he always seemed to be a nineteenth-century liberal in the best sense of the term. He was above all a rationalist, who had reviewed the evidence for God's existence at the age of 13 and found it wanting. This was a year after he had been freed from Bergen-Belsen and was deciding to migrate to the Palestine of the British Mandate. Just over 20 years later, after the Six Day War he took an unsparing look at Israel's brutal treatment of Palestinians and decided that Israel was not a democracy and that the system of racist oppression bore many elements that were reminiscent of Nazism. "Nazi-like" was a much-used epithet in Shahak's notations, and it incensed many. In 1968 he began, as he put it, "to act".

Back at the start of the 1980s the image of Israel as a rational exercise in social democracy flourished mightily and thus it was all the more startling to hear Shahak's expositions of the racist, mystical strains in Israel's religio-political culture.

"This mysticism," he told CounterPunch co-editor Cockburn back in 1980, "is extremely dangerous. If you accept religiously the validity of 16th and 17th century mysticism, then you have the basis for their conclusions. It has parallels to Christian fundamentalism. If you accept the idea that Jonathan Edwards was right in the 17th century, many things that Jerry Falwell says now follow. The right-wing religious fanatics compose the most dangerous group, socially and politically, that has existed in the entire history of Israel."

Shahak was full of unexpected learning. He delighted in ironies. Though they had virtually no imperial tradition the Danes, he pointed out, had imposed in their tiny colony of St Croix one of the most ferocious labor codes in history. A moment later he was discoursing on a strange international tribunal

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(**OLS** *continued from page 3)*

of judges that toured through the Congo in full ceremonial judicial regalia in the early twentieth century, interviewing people about the horrors of their subjugation by King Leopold. Then he embarked on a discourse on Jewish jokes, a topic on which he claimed to be a great authority.

What effects did Shahak's unsparing explications of the situation in Israel have on public opinion? We would say, over the years, that he exercised great influence, ripples from his bulletins and, later, from his books, spreading slowly, often imperceptibly out through the pond. He didn't always get things right. For years he prophesied a war between Israel and Syria that never came. He could be volcanic in his disputes. He was a great man, a great conscience, because he understood not only the broad outlines and historical origins of systems of oppression and racism, he sensed the sting of these oppressions and racisms in all their pettiest details, like a military bureaucrat in the Territories bullying a Palestinian tomato farmer because his permit for sale was torn.

"Here is a practical proposal to you," he said to Cockburn at the end of their 1980 conversation. "Discuss the basic facts of the oppression of the Palestinians by Israel as much as you can, going right down to the basics of everyday racism. Point out the obvious contradiction between what the majority of American Jews demand for themselves in the USA and what they defend in Israel. Do not be intimidated in the struggle against racism and for human dignity, equality and freedom by any demagoguery about peace and democracy, if they are used in the cause of discrimination, and perhaps the words of the prophet (Amos, 5.15) will come true. 'Hate the evil and love the good and establish judgement in the gate, it may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.'"

Surfeit of Dentists

In the wake of Becky Grant's item on dental scams in our last issue, CounterPuncher John Farley adds this comment. "Dentists have succeeded in getting people to floss and brush their teeth, and much of the drinking water is now fluoridated. This reduces the "drill and fill" business of dentists. Thus they have partially put themselves out of business by their successful public health campaigns. In some parts of the country, dentists are in surplus supply. Dental schools have closed in some parts of the country. This puts dentists under pressure to perform unnecessary work to bring in the money. My own dentist, in Las Vegas, tells me that he would love to move to California, but the field is too overcrowded there. He says that dentists in California are working as dental assistants. So getting a second opinion sounds like a good idea."

Angelina Jolie and the French Revolution

Since the finely honed intellect, not to mention exuberant body of Angelina Jolie has become an object of vulgar interest to many of my associates we turned eagerly to Britain's News of the World for an update on the star of Tomb Raider. The Murdoch-owned Sunday tabloid was full of ripe detail about Angelina's self-confessed sexual tastes, plus admiring commentary from her husband, Billy Bob Thornton and former co-star Elizabeth Mitchell, who starred with her in a movie about lesbian supermodel Gia Carangi, and who sighed to the News of the World: "Angelina's got such beautiful lips and they're all her own. She's all real. She's a work of nature." As so often, it depends how you define nature.

It seems that Billy Bob hires a nurse to extract his blood so he can send droplets to Angelina when she is away filming. She wears it in an ampule around her neck. Chic, and reminiscent of the red threads the fast set of young aristocrats used to wear round their necks in late eighteenth-century France, on the Directoire period. The threads were an ironic homage to the guillotine on which many of their relatives had perished.

The News of the World tells us that this daughter of Jon Voight and French actress Marcheline Bertrand, born in Los Angeles, "spent much of her childhood living out of suitcases. At 14 she began to rebel and had a live-in boyfriend at her mother's house. She also began mutilating herself with knives."

In harmony with this teenage habit, she and Billy Bob keep a knife under their pillow to slash at each other during sex sessions. They spent last Christmas happily cutting their fingers and daubing messages in blood on the walls above their bed. "I was looking at her asleep," Mr Thornton confided to the News of the World reporters, "and I had to restrain myself from literally squeezing her to death. Sex for us is almost too much. It's so intense that sometimes we can look at each other and think, 'We can't get into this right now or something's going to happen'."

Over the breakfast table, the News of the World reports, he confessed to her that he had come close to doing her in the night before. "Angelina added: 'You know when you love someone so much you can almost kill them? I nearly was killed one night, and it was the nicest thing anyone has ever said to me!'"

Oh well, knives for some, ear plugs and eye blinders for others. Returning to that red thread and the guillotine, the common view is that thousands of French aristos perished under the blade. Not true. Greer's statistical study The Incidence of the Terror, published in 1935, shows that 666 nobles got the chop in Paris and another 1,543 in the rest of France. Compare that to the carnage after the French commune of 1871 when some 20,000 Communards were executed.

They spent last Christmas happily cutting their fingers and daubing messages in blood on the walls above their bed.

Come to think about it, Angelina and Billy Bob could do a movie about Charlotte Corday's stabbing of Marat in his bath. The Jacobins were terrified of female radicals. Olympe de Gouges, author of Les Droits de la femme et de la citoyenne (1791) perished on the guillotine not long thereafter, as did Madam Roland. St Just invoked the "male energy" of the Republic.

In his very interesting 1993 book Bodywork Peter Brooks wrote, "In the … cult of Marat Charlotte Corday is present only in that gash in Marat's breast, a kind of displaced representation of her woman's sex as a wound on the martyred man.

"David's painting, Marat Assassiné, says it all: the ecstatic face of the martyr, the drops of blood on the immaculate sheet, the quill pen still grasped next to the kitchen knife fallen on the floor, the bathwater become a pool of blood – all these elements suggest the intrusion of ungoverned female sexuality on a life dedicated to the higher cause."

And now of course the sexuality and the higher cause are united in Angelina! Who says dialectics don't work. CP

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Better, RAND concludes, to mimic the Peruvian model and empower the death squads into "a supervised network of self-defense organizations".

(**Colombia** *continued from page 1)*
numbers about 7,000 fighters—2,000 fewer than the paramilitary death squads.

Both RAND and the World Bank point to the horrifying level of "social intolerance killings", which for men aged 14-44 reached a level of 394 deaths per 100,000 last year. In all, Colombia endures 30,000 annual murders, double the number for the entire United States in 1998. Slightly more than 23,000 murders have been linked to "illegal armed organizations" since 1988. The implication is that the FARC is responsible for these killings and one has to dig deep into the RAND analysis to discover otherwise. In fact, according to statistics compiled by the Colombian government, about 3,500 people were killed by the guerrillas and 19,652 by paramilitaries and "private justice" groups.

The leader of the AUC, the central command for the 19 paramilitary "fronts," is a sadistic scoundrel named Carlos Castaño, who supervises a killing program right off the pages of the CIA's Phoenix Program's operations manual. The RAND report details how Castaño's AUC routinely executes "suspected guerrilla sympathizers" in order "to instill fear and compel support among the local population". When that strategy fails to deliver, the AUC simply launches an all-out attack on the villages and slaughters the inhabitants. RAND dispassionately notes that the AUC justifies these atrocities, using language that even Bob Kerrey might admire, as a legitimate way to "remove the guerrillas' supply network".

The robust ties between the paramilitaries and the Colombian military (not to mention the CIA and the Pentagon) are cursorily dispensed with by RAND in a brisk few sentences, concluding that, given the circumstances, such relations are only natural. RAND fails to note that many of the leaders of paramilitary groups were once officers in the Colombian military, some of them trained at the School of the Americas. Although there are nearly as many paramilitary fighters as there are guerrillas, there is a gross and telling disparity between the numbers of paramilitaries (76) versus guerrillas (2,677) killed by the Colombian military.

The RAND study makes a great effort to legitimize the role of the paramilitaries, remarking that "the term paramilitaries is an unsatisfactory rubric to describe the *autodefensas*, although it has gained widespread currency [so widespread, in fact, that it is used throughout the RAND report]…It has no particular descriptive value in referring to the autodefensas and (perhaps intentionally) might convey the implication of quasi-political status". With such sinister nonsense and despite the murders and the drug trafficking, RAND attempts to portray many of the paramilitaries as performing necessary self-policing functions in the absence of strong state authority, a kind of benign civic group "based on the neighborhood watch concept".

Although 20 pages are devoted to discussion of the FARC's ties to the drug trade, the RAND report spends only a single paragraph on the links of the paramilitaries and the narco-traffickers. But this paragraph is as damning as it is brief. RAND grudgingly admits that Castaño's group derives "a considerable extent" of its income from the drug trade and notes that eight of the AUC's 19 death squads also serve as protection gangs for the cocaine industry.

Castaño himself has boasted to CNN's International Division of his relationship with the drug lords. He said that 70 percent of the funds for the AUC come from the drug trade, with the remaining 30 percent, the RAND report notes in a stark parenthesis, "coming largely from extortion".

The Colombian government under Pastrana (though not the Colombian generals) takes the public position that the paramilitaries are at least as big of a threat as the FARC and the ELN and is moving, rhetorically, at least, to suppress them. RAND condemns this approach as "unwise and shortsighted". Better, RAND concludes, to mimic the Peruvian or Guatemalan counter-insurgency models and fashion the death squads into "a supervised network of self-defense organizations".

This same Peruvian model was created by Vladimir Montesinos, the head of Peruvian intelligence, recently extradited from Venezuela to Peru and imprisoned in a high security prison he himself had helped to design. Montesinos, a longtime CIA asset, won his spurs with his bloody tactics against the Shining Path rebels but fell from grace when it came to light that he had organized a shipment of arms from Jordan to the FARC. The CIA was so enraged that it engineered his downfall.

According to Peruvian sources, the shipment of guns from Jordan by Montesinos to the FARC was originally intended for the paramilitaries in Colombia (arranged with full CIA approval of course) which the wily Montesinos sold for a higher price to the FARC. This story rings true - Jordan is essentially a US colony - so it's much more likely that weapons shipment from there would have to be for an approved customer.

Even more menacingly, RAND suggests that the Colombians could reconfigure the paramilitaries into roving National Guard units that will hunt-and-kill guerrillas. RAND hints that this may already be under way with US help. There's no question that the Colombian military, under the eye of US advisers, is taking a more aggressive tactic, employing hunt-and-kill squads supervised by School of America-trained officers. The RAND analysts were particularly excited

SUBSCRIPTION INFO

Enter/Renew Subscription here:

One year individual, $40
($35 email only / $45 email/print)
One year institution/supporters $100
One year student/low income, $30
T-shirts, $17
Please send back issue(s)
_____ ($5/issue)

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

_____

Payment must accompany order, or just dial 1-800-840-3683 and renew by credit card. Add $17.50 for foreign subscriptions. If you want CounterPunch emailed to you please supply your email address. Make checks payable to: **CounterPunch.**
Business Office
PO Box 228, Petrolia, CA 95558

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

with the results of Operation Annihilator II, a bloody raid on FARC strongholds in Sumapaz. RAND notes approvingly that the body count from Colombian military strikes rose from 364 in 1999 to 506 in 2000.

Plan Colombia (the US-imposed Colombian government strategy) is inadequate to the task of eradicating cocaine or the FARC, RAND warns. Moreover, RAND advises that the US contribution, $862.3 million a year, to the effort is too paltry to make much of a difference.

RAND calmly ridicules the requirement for human rights training and monitoring, which is attached to the US aid package. "There is a question of the practical limitations on the Colombian government's ability to prevent human rights violations in the context of an armed insurrection," the RAND analysts comfortably contend. To buttress this assessment, RAND points to the US experience in Vietnam, arguing that the slaughter of civilians is simply a cost of doing business during wartime and that "even with disciplined troops, the chain of command will ultimately break down at times under the stress of combat".

Of course, most of the US massacres in Vietnam were the result of troops carrying out official policy, such as Phoenix missions, and not the actions of crazed grunts going on killing sprees. The same is true in Colombia, where in the past two years alone 477 police and military officers have been found guilty of human rights abuses by civilian courts.

The thrust of Plan Colombia's cocaine suppression campaign–and the bulk of US aid—is aimed at Colombian troops seizing coca fields under FARC control in the Putumayo district. This "southern strategy", RAND admits, is a thinly veiled effort to rechannel anti-drug efforts into a full-blown assault on a major FARC stronghold, with US helicopters doing the brunt of the air assaults and US advisors providing aid to the fledgling Colombian military in this riverine region and "for improved radar, airfields and intelligence collection".

But RAND warns that by targeting coca production, particularly with the widespread use of toxic fumigants, the Colombian military, and its US advisors, may actually end up bolstering the FARC's public standing in the region. "According to the governor of Putumayo, about 135,000 of the district's 314,000 inhabitants depend directly on the coca crop for their livelihood. Intensified coca irradication would probably be resisted by the local population, which generate a serious social conflict, further delegitimate the Colombian government among the populace and strengthen support for the FARC."

RAND rightly notes that the aerial fumigation of coca crops is backfiring politically. "Absent viable economic alternatives [such as crop substitution and infrastructure development], fumigation may simply displace growers to other regions and increase support for the guerrillas.

RAND concludes that the only solution is the elimination of the threat to the "stability" of the region posed by the FARC and the ELN. It also advises the Pentagon that "the Colombian government, left to its own devices, does not have the institutional or material resources to reverse unfavorable trends." One of those trends is the resurrection of the domino theory, called here the "spillover effect." RAND suggests that if the US doesn't intervene the Colombian situation "will metastasize into a wider regional upheaval". It is up to the US to act as the "deus ex machina" in this conflict.

Aside from stepping up direct military aid to Colombia, RAND urges the Pentagon to expand the US military presence in the bordering nations as well, including "helping Panama fill the security vacuum in its southern provinces."

The Colombian military, under the coaching of US advisers, is taking a more aggressive tactic, employing hunt-and-kill squads.

The Marcella paper is a more distilled version of the RAND report. Marcella, a specialist in South American matters at the Defense War College, suggests that the future US role in Colombia become more like US operations in El Salvador than Vietnam—which means the deployment of death-squads-by-proxy. Remember that the firm of Cheney, Powell and Rumsfeld has lately reassembled the old gang that directed such mayhem and misery in Latin America during the 1980s: John Negroponte, Otto Reich and Elliott Abrams. Marcella approvingly invokes the neo-Thatcherite English theorist John Dunn: "there cannot be political control without the capacity to coerce". CP

CounterPunch
3220 N Street, NW, PMB 346
Washington, DC 20007-2829

Attention Subscribers: the number that appears above your name on the mailing label refers to the ISSUE NUMBER AND YEAR of CounterPunch after which your subscription expires. For example ,14 01 stands for the 14th issue of 2001, ie, July 16-31.

Incredible Strike in California's Prison Dungeons

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED